

VZCZCXRO3366

PP RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHIHL RUEHKUK
DE RUEHGB #3224/01 2441217

ZNY CCCCC ZZH

P 011217Z SEP 06

FM AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6613

INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RHEHWSR/WHITE HOUSE SITUATION ROOM WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 003224

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/31/2016

TAGS: PGOV KDEM I2

SUBJECT: SPEAKER NOT OUT OF THE WOODS; REPORTEDLY CEDES
SOME AUTHORITIES TO DEPUTY SPEAKER ATTIYAH

REF: A. (A) BAGHDAD 2929

1B. (B) BAGHDAD 2967

Classified By:

(U) Classified by Acting Political Counselor Michael
J. Adler for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) SUMMARY. The Speaker of the Council of Representatives Mahmoud Al-Mashadani has reportedly ceded some of his authorities to Deputy Speaker Khalid Al-Attiyah as part of an agreement to try to preserve his position. While press speculation that he may be removed as Speaker has largely disappeared, there is still dissatisfaction, even within his own bloc, with his performance. Leading Iraqi Islamic Party (IIP) official Dr. Alaa Mekki told PolOff August 31 that a Tawafuq CoR member caucus meeting might raise the topic of the Speaker's performance. Mekki claimed that most Tawafuq members would support removing Mashadani. The Speaker's National Security Advisor, Alex Tierjanin, put the blame for Mashadani's problems squarely on the Speaker's son and Chief of Staff Abd al-Bassit. Ahmed Al-Quraishi, Attiyah's Chief of Staff, told PolOff August 25 that the Speaker had given the Deputy Speaker authorities over the security of the CoR, as well as over the financial and administrative portfolios. In addition, the Speaker and the two Deputies have reportedly agreed that the CoR staff should be similar in ethnic and sectarian makeup to the legislature itself. END SUMMARY

PRESS SPECULATION ABOUT MASHADANI'S REMOVAL HAS DIMINISHED AFTER SHIA COALITION DENIES IT WILL LEAD SUCH EFFORTS

12. (C) Speaker of the CoR Mahmoud Al-Mashadani has reportedly ceded some of his authorities to Deputy Speaker Khalid Al-Attiyah as part of an agreement to try to preserve his position. (COMMENT: It is unclear whether this agreement was struck with Al-Attiyah personally, or with the political blocs. END COMMENT). The Speaker's frequent foreign trips, his perceived lack of consultation (particularly over the signing of a friendship agreement with the Ba'athist Syrian parliament), and his inflammatory public statements caused so much anger among the Kurdish Alliance and Shia Coalition members (REF A) that press reports speculated August 14 and 15 that he would be removed when the CoR reconvened or would resign. Since then, the talk of his removal has diminished. Leading SCIRI figure Humam Al-Hammoudi told PolCouns August 17 that the Shia Coalition would not take the lead in dealing with the Speaker; instead, this would be Tawafuq's responsibility. He added that the CoR might limit the term of the Speaker's office by limiting it to one year so he would face re-election. Hammoudi repeated similar statements to the local media August 17.

¶3. (C) However, the Speaker's image took a new hit when a local newspaper published a front-page story August 24 highlighting the arrest of one of his bodyguards for planting IEDs. Mashadani's Chief of Staff and son Abd al-Bassit Al-Mashadani claimed to PolOff August 27 that the accused is innocent. Leading IIP and CoR member Dr. Alaa Mekki told PolOff August 31 that a Tawafiq CoR member caucus meeting to be held that same day might raise the topic of the Speaker's performance. When asked, Mekki claimed that most Tawafiq members would support removing the Speaker. The Speaker's National Security Advisor, Alex Tierjanin, later told PolOff that he is not happy with the Speaker's performance, and that he put the blame squarely on Abd al-Bassit, whose character he likened to Oday Hussein's. He said the Speaker could be saved if Abd al-Bassit were removed (NOTE: Abd al-Bassit was promoted to Chief of Staff shortly before the CoR went on August recess. END NOTE)

SPEAKER CEDES ADMINISTRATIVE, FINANCIAL, AND SECURITY
AUTHORITIES

¶4. (C) Ahmed al-Quraishi, Attiyah's Chief of Staff, told PolOff August 25 that, as part of the agreement, the Deputy Speaker is now handling the security of the CoR, financial, and administrative portfolios (NOTE: Article 34 (8)&(9) of the CoR bylaws provides that the Speaker is responsible for "taking precautionary measures to maintain order and security inside the CoR" and "supervising and oversight of all CoR staff and exercising all powers given to him in this regard, in a manner that does not contradict with Article 9 of the bylaws." Article 9(5)-(7) of the bylaws

BAGHDAD 00003224 002 OF 002

empowers the Speaker and two deputies collectively with the functions of administrative formation, financial administration policy, and the budget. END NOTE.) On a day to day basis, the Speaker will still run the sessions and represent the CoR at meetings. Quraishi said this agreement is just oral, not written. Muhammad al-Obaidi, advisor to Deputy Speaker Arif Taifour, told PolOff August 25 that the dislike between Attiyah and Mashadani is so strong that they no longer meet. On August 28, Quraishi confirmed that there has been no direct communication between the two since Attiyah denied funding for Mashadani's return trip to Syria August 12 (REF B).

¶5. (C) Already, Al-Attiyah's influence is being felt. According al-Quraishi, the CoR will soon issue a complete weapons ban in the Convention Center and a limit on the number of bodyguards principals can bring into the Convention Center. Chief of Security Yaqdhan Dhakheel told PolOff August 23 that bodyguards can currently enter the building with a weapon and leave without it and then enter again with another weapon (alluding to recent rumors that members the Speaker's protective detail are storing weapons in the Speaker's suite).

SECTARIAN HIRING OF EMPLOYEES: PARLIAMENT STAFF TO REFLECT
MAKEUP OF COR

¶6. (C) The Speaker and two deputies have also begun efforts to implement the spirit of Article 9 (12)(A) of the bylaws that calls for them to agree "in taking decisions related to appointing (employees and staff) . . . in a way to achieve the principle of balance, equal opportunities for all Iraqis to fill the state's positions..." Director of the Research Directorate, Saifaldin Abdurrahman, told PolOff August 21 that the Speaker and two Deputies had agreed that the CoR staff should be similar in ethnic and sectarian makeup to the CoR itself. He expressed his frustration that the new staff is being appointed to

directorates without consulting the general directors as to whether anyone is needed and what skills they should have. He expressed his fear that the non-partisan Research Directorate could instead become sectarian.

COMMENT

¶7. (C) If the reports of this agreement prove correct, Deputy Speaker Khalid Al-Attiyah will have strengthened his position as the most powerful leader in the CoR. He is already the most effective chair of CoR sessions, and now effectively controls the internal administrative functions. Assuming the Speaker can hold on to his job, he seems content to be largely restricted to making speeches and representing the CoR in public fora. Deputy Speaker Arif Taifour has not yet shown any signs of wanting to actively participate. His staff is still quite small, and his Chief of Staff spends the vast majority of the time in Kurdistan.
SPECKHARD